



# Administration on Aging

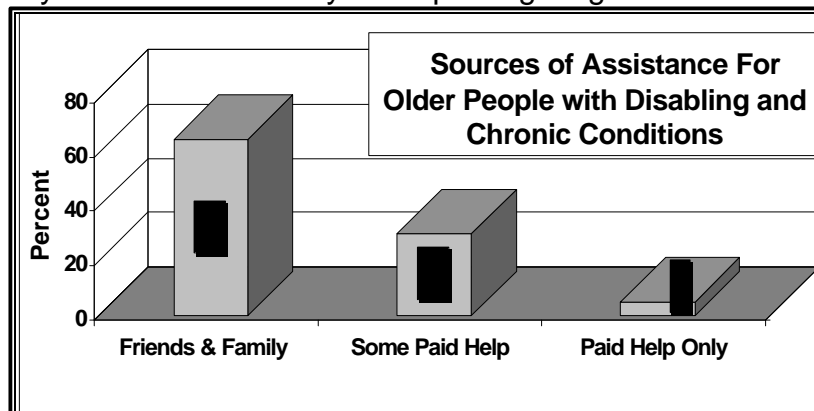
Honor the Past, Imagine the Future: Towards a Society for All Ages

## Family Caregiver Fact Sheet

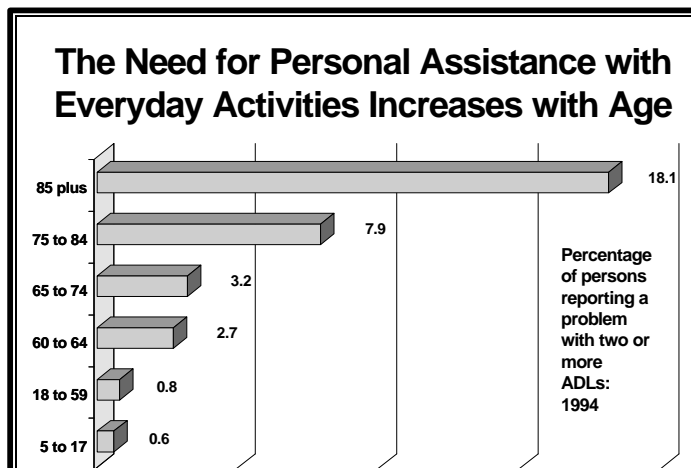
According to the most recent National Long Term Care Survey, over seven million people are informal caregivers, i.e. spouses, adult children, other relatives and friends who provide unpaid help to older people living in the community with at least one limitation in their activities of daily living. According to the Survey, if the work of these caregivers had to be replaced by paid home care staff, the cost to our nation would be \$45-75 billion per year.

Family caregivers have always been the mainstay underpinning long term care (LTC) for older persons in this country. Among those elders who live in the community and need assistance with activities of daily living, 95% have family members involved in their care.

This degree of caregiver involvement has remained fairly constant over more than a decade, bearing witness to the remarkable resilience of the American family in taking care of its older relative despite increased geographic separation, greater numbers of women in the workforce, and other changes in family life.



Thus, family caregiving has been a blessing in many respects, not least as a budget-saver to governments who annually face the problem of financing the health and LTC expenses of persons with chronic illness and disabilities. However, the costs to caregivers - in terms of time, physical and emotional stress, and financial burdens - can be significant.

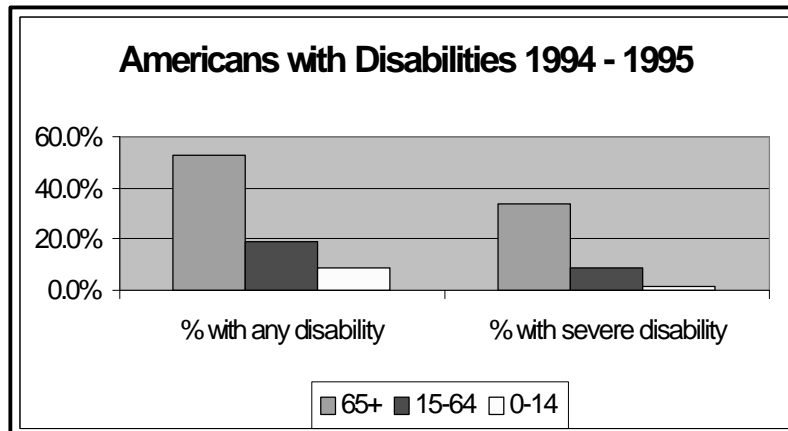


For example, the National LTC Survey and other

research have documented that:

Caregivers dedicate on average 20 hours per week providing care for older persons and even more time when the older person has multiple disabilities;

Bearing the LTC responsibilities for an older relative or friend with disabilities places heavy emotional strain on the caregiver and often results in depression;



Caring for an older person with disabilities can be demanding. It can involve heavy lifting and turning, frequent bedding changes, and helping a person use a toilet – all of which can physically strain caregivers, many of whom are older persons too;

2/3rds of working caregivers report conflicts between work and caregiving which require them to rearrange their work schedules, work fewer than normal hours, and/or take unpaid leaves of absence.

National recognition is beginning to be paid to the critical role of families in the provision of LTC. In 1993, President Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act into law to ensure that businesses address the needs of their employees with regard to eldercare. Every year President Clinton issues a formal proclamation designating the week of Thanksgiving as “National Family Caregivers Week,” a period set aside for the nation to honor and support the daily contributions of family caregivers.

### **National Family Caregiver Support Program**

In January 1999, President Clinton announced the National Family Caregiver Support Program, one of four LTC initiatives to be proposed in the FY 2000 budget, to help families sustain their efforts to care for an older relative who has serious chronic illness or disability. Under this

proposed Older Americans Act program, the State Offices on Aging, working in partnership with local Area Agencies on Aging, community service providers and consumer organizations, will be expected to put in place five program components:

**Provision of information to caregivers about available services;**

**Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to such services;**

**Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and provision of caregiver training to help families make decisions and solve problems relating to their caregiver roles;**

**Respite care to enable families and other informal caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities; and**

**Provision of supplemental long term care services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers and other informal caregivers**

### **The National Aging Network**

Under the authority of the Older Americans Act, the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) works closely with the national network of aging organizations to plan, coordinate, and provide home and community-based services to meet the unique needs of older persons and their caregivers. The aging network includes: AoA's Regional offices; 57 State Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs); 223 tribal organizations representing 300 tribes; and thousands of service providers, senior centers, caregivers and volunteers.

The local Area Agency on Aging is one of the first resources a caregiver should contact when help is needed. Almost every state has one or more AAAs, which serve the local community, its elderly residents and their families (In a few states, the State Unit or Office on Aging serves as the AAA).

Local AAAs are generally listed in the city or county government sections of the telephone directory under Aging or Social Services.

### **The Eldercare Locator**

AoA supports a nationwide, toll-free information and assistance directory called the Eldercare Locator, which can locate the appropriate AAA to help an individual needing assistance. Older persons and caregivers can contact the Eldercare Locator by calling toll-free, **1-800-677-1116**, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time. Callers to the Eldercare Locator will speak to a friendly, caring person who will help them. When contacting the Locator, callers should have readily available the address, zip code and county of residence for the person needing assistance.

**For more information about the Administration on Aging, please contact:**

**Administration on Aging  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Washington, D.C. 20201**

**Phone: (202) 619-0724**

**Fax: (202) 260-1012**

**TDD: (202) 401-7575**

**E-mail: [aoainfo@aoa.gov](mailto:aoainfo@aoa.gov)**

**Internet Website: <http://www.aoa.gov>**